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SMÄRRE MEDDELANDEN

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HE USE OF STILTS

ESPECIALLY IN AFRICA AND AMERICA

BY

K. G. LINDBLOM

STOCKHOLM 1927

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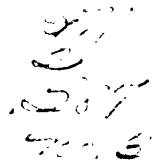

Gernandts Boktr. A.-B., Sthlm 1927.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The author feels it strongly incumbent upon him to address to certain colleagues and friends his warmest thanks for their kindly assistance in the collecting of material for this paper. In the first place, then, my thanks are due to Prof. Dr. B. Struck of Dresden, and to Prof. Dr. D. Westermann of Berlin, of whom especially the former has exceedingly added to my knowledge of the use of stilts in Africa. In order to obviate the necessity of noting in the letterpress each instance when information previously unknown to me has been supplied by Prof. Struck, I will here give a list of the tribes concerned, viz.: Malinke, Vai, Yoruba, Banyangi (Conrau), Wute, Balong, Yaunde, Ntum, Asimba, Babisa-Mbozhwa, Washambaa, Azandeh. Some of his data I have grouped together to form an appendix at the end of this paper. Thanks to the amplifications supplied by Prof. Struck, the distribution of the use of stilts in Africa will here be found delineated in as complete a manner as, on the whole, well may be possible. And it is with that end in view that I have here included even quotations of considerable length, so that all information on stilts in Africa should be collected in one place.

In addition, for data as to stilts in Central and North America I am agreeably indebted to Dr. Krickeberg of Berlin, and Dr. K. Birket-Smith of Copenhagen.

For the translation into English I am obliged to Mr. G. M. E. Leijer.

G. L.

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THE USE OF STILTS

ESPECIALLY IN AFRICA AND AMERICA.

Stilts are known from various parts of the Old World, as well as sporadically from America, and as to their uses, these may be divided into three categories, viz., (1) for practical purposes, e. g., for traversing certain tracts of land — including, it is said, ground that is flooded, or even marshes. (2) A more or less ritual use, particularly in masked dances, in order to render the deities represented, the demons or the spirits, taller and thus more impressive of aspect. (3) As playthings for children, and (4) for purposes of sport (the borderline between 3. and 4. no doubt being rather fluxional).

A well-known example of 1. is found in the stilt-walkers (shepherds, mail carriers, etc.) of Les Landes, the moorlands of south-western France, which formerly to a great extent probably were marshes, and where at the most only a century ago large reaches were under water in the winter time. The shepherds use their tall stilts in order to be able to overlook their flocks. On the steppes of Médoc the stilts *(chanquer)* were used by people of all ages and sexes[1]. Also in Bas Poitou and in southwestern Germany[2] stilts are put to a practical use. In the 17th century they were used by the country people of Carniola when crossing rivers[3] (fig. 3). In certain parts of Melanesia they are said to be used as a means of transit from the platform of one pile-dwelling to that of another[4].

A class of men that with certainty originally belonged to group 2. were the stilt-walkers, *grallatores* (*grallae,* 'stilts'), who in the plays of ancient Rome appeared in the parts of certain harlequin-like figures, such as Aegipan, a sylvan deity.[5] Closer investigation as to whether this custom was not one imported from the Greeks of southern Italy

[1] *H. Kerp,* Die Landschaften Europas, pp. 117, 152. Trier 1908 (after Rosa Bonheur).

[2] *A. Haberlandt,* in Buschan's Völkerkunde, II : 2, pp. 248, 371, fig. 208. Stuttgart 1926.

[3] *J. W. Valvasor,* Die Ehre des Hertzogthums Crain, I, p. 152, fig. 8. Laybach 1689.

[4] *L. Frobenius,* Ursprung der afrikanischen Kulturen, p. 267. Berlin 1898. I have not been able to find any first-hand statements.

[5] *Forcellini,* Lexicon totius latinitatis, art. *grallae.*

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might be profitable. To the same category should also be referred the use of stilts in modern carnivals and masked processions in Italy and France. Of great fame were the races and fights on stilts that formerly were arranged at Namur before important personages, such as Charles V., Peter the Great, and Napoleon. The performers were youths who were ranged in opposing teams against each other, being mounted on stilts at a height of about 1,30 metre above the ground. By jolts with the elbow, or by tripping up — the only means recognized — it was sought to overset the opponent. The most celebrated of these battles on stilts was fought in 1669. Towards the end of the 18th century they were prohibited by the magistracy of Namur. Subsequently they were revived, but only to be definitely abolished in 1814[1].

In Ulricehamn (a town in western Sweden) Dr. S. Lovén, according to what he has told me, on a St Lucia's day once saw a lot of boys among whom there were some dressed up as old women, others at any rate with blackened faces, whilst one of the crowd was walking on stilts. He was wearing old and shabby clothes, and he had blackened his face in parts. This kind of thing however does not — according to some old residents in Ulricehamn — appear to constitute an old traditional custom in that town. On the other hand Dr. N. E. Hammarstedt has pointed out to me the existence in the Nordiska Museet at Stockholm of a copy of a picture by the painter Per Hörberg (died 1816) representing a dance round the maypole in the Swedish Province of Småland, and among those present there is also two men mounted on stilts (fig. 4)[2]. The inhabitants of Les Landes performed dances on their tall stilts (R. Bonheur).

A good instance of a purely ritual use of stilts I have found from the Central Provinces of India: "children and young men swing and walk on stilts in the fields, or play with little grooved wheels of wood and brass, to which a long string is tied, the wheel being thrown into the air and dragged back again, the theory being that the crop will grow as high as the stiltwalker, or as long as the swing or wheel ascends into the air"[3]. Presumably this way of using stilts is identical with that re-

[1] La Grande Encyclopédie, art. échasse.

[2] Reproduced in Rig, p. 132. Stockholm 1925 (*N. E. Hammarstedt,* Svenska folklivsmålningar från 1600- och 1700-talen).

[3] *W. Crooke,* The Holi: A Vernal Festival of the Hindus, p. 81. Folk-Lore XXV. London 1914.

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lated by E. M. Gordon från rural festivals in Bilaspore, C. Provinces, at which the boys walk about on bamboos for fifteen days. Such stilt festivals seem peculiar to this part of India, says Crooke[1].

In New Zealand stilts were formerly used "with great delight by children". It however appears as if in the olden days there existed also a sort of ritual use for stilts: "In one of the Maori legends Whiro and Tama-te-Kapua are made the gods or patrons of thieving, though both of them are well-known ancestors, who flourished, the first three generations before, and the second at the time of the migration to New Zealand, about 1350. They went on stilts (*pou-toko*) when going to steal, so that their footsteps should not be traced, and to enable them to reach the high stages (*whata)* on which food was kept"[2]. See also in this connection Schweinfurth's statement about thieves on stilts, among the Mangbetu, quoted below.

Of category 3. quite a number of examples could doubtless be given. At random I may mention that most Swedish boys at some time or other probably made themselves stilts, and the same may be said to apply to most European countries. Boys in the Philippines use them, "girls very rarely"[3]. Dr. W. Kaudern has kindly informed me that he saw stilts in Celebes, in the north (Mongondou) as well as in the central parts, although only among boys at the mission stations. These stilts consisted of long bamboo poles, with a piece of bamboo about a foot long as a rest for the foot, the way of attaching it being by threading the pole through a hole in the foot-rest. The foot was not placed across the support, but *lengthwise* to it, and with the big toe and

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[1] *E. M. Gordon,* Indian Folk-Tales, being side-light on village life in Bilaspore, Central Provinces. London 1908. I only know this work from the review Crooke makes of it in Folklore, p. 506, XIX. London 1908.

[2] *A. Hamilton,* Maori Art, p. 379. Wellington, NZ. MDCCCCI. H. also reproduces (Pl. XXVI, fig. 2) a wood-carving supposed to represent Tama-te-Kapua on his stilts. It would rather seem, however, as if the objects in his hands were a pair of short, richly carved, staves, instead of stilts. Cf. also *F. v. Luschan,* Zusammenhänge u. Konvergenz, p. 91 (art. Stelzen). Mitteil. d. Anthr. Ges. in Wien, Bd XXXXVII. Wien 1917.

[3] *M. Vanoverbergh,* Iloko Games, p. 226. Anthropos 1927.

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the second toe gripping the pole. The fact of the rest for the foot being lengthwise, appears to me an indication of the Celebes boys not having learnt stilt-walking from the mission children, and this all the more as the same method of rest supporting the foot is used in Japan (cf. fig. 5):

"The boys are as fond of walking on stilts as are our boys. The stilts are called *chikuba*[1]; literally, "bamboo horse". One speaks of a boyhood friend as a *chikuba no tomodachi*, or "stilt friend". Figure 465 [fig. 1] represents two types of stilts, one made of two pieces of wood bound to bamboo by cord. The rest for the foot, instead of being transverse to the foot, is lengthwise, so that the whole sole of the foot is supported. The other is a rarer form made entirely of wood. The stilts may be four or five feet in height, and the boys often hop on one stilt and with the other endeavor to dislodge, or pull down an antagonist, and in this way get up lively contests"[2]. Boys in Japan are also said to "play various games and run races on stilts"[3]. According to Culin (1895), "stilts were introduced into Korea from Japan within the last ten years, but are not much used at the present time"[4].

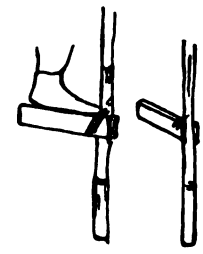

Fig. 1. Stilts, Japan. (After Morse).

Culin makes no mention of the existence of stilts in China, and for my own part I have been unsuccessful in gaining any information on this point further than the world for 'stilts' in Chinese, *pó kióh mu*[5], *po kio hy* or *kao kiao*[6]. Andree, however, says there they are "used with

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[1] Culin calls them *Take uma*, "bamboo horses". This word is also given by *Hepburn* (An English-Japanese Dictionary, Tokyo 1894) and *Hobart Hampden & Parlett* (An Engl.-Jap. Dict., Tokyo 1904). In the lastmentioned there is also *sage-ashi*, and *taka-ashi* (provincialism).

[2] *E. S. Morse*, Japan Day by Day, II, p. 81. Boston 1917.

[3] *W. E. Griffis*, The Games and Sports of Japanese Children. Transact. Asiatic Soc. of Japan, II, p. 131. Yokohama 1882.

[4] *S. Culin*, Korean Games with Notes on the corresponding Games of China and Japan, p. 9 (with fig.). Philadelphia 1895.

[5] *S. Wells Williams*, An English and Chinese Vocabulary. Macao 1844.

[6] *P. Perny*, Dict. Français-Latin-Chinois de la langue Mandarine parlée. Paris 1869. *R. Morrison* (A Dictionary of the Chinese Language, London 1822) gives *po keo he*, "stilts, to play with or exhibits feats on them".

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great skill"[1] and refers to Doolittle, whose work, however, unfortunately I have not at hand[2].

As regards Polynesia, there are a few, scattered, statements. In Tahiti walking on stilts was "a favourite amusement with the youth of both sexes. The stilts were formed by nature, and generally consisted of the straight branches of a tree, with a small branch projecting on one side. Their naked feet were placed on this short branch and thus, elevated about three feet from the ground, they pursued their pastime"[3]. On the Hervey Islands "walking on stilts (*rore*) was an amusement for males of all ages"[4].

Examples of the use of stilts for sport we have already had from Japan. For real sport it may be said that they are used by the natives of the Marquesas Islands, who with great skill run races on stilts, or at least did so in former times: "Bey ihren grossen öffentlichen Festen stellen sie auf denselben Wettrennen an, wobey immer einer dem andern in den Weg zu kommen, und auf einem Bein oder Stab balancirend, mit dem andern seinen Gegner während des Laufes umzuschlagen sucht. Der zu Boden gestreckte wird zum allgemeinen Gelächter und Gespötte. Die Ausübung dieser Kunst erregte desto mehr unsere Aufmerksamkeit, da die glatten Steine, womit der Tanzplatz belegt ist, das Laufen schwieriger machen müssen. Kinder von acht bis zehn Jahren gewöhnen sich schon an den Gebrauch derselben"[5]. The statement made long ago by Marchand that the natives of Nukahivah made use of stilts for traversing inundated ground during the rainy season does not appear very probable[6]. Those expert swimmers could hardly have been afraid of water. On the other hand I am inclined to accept Oldman's statement that stilts in the Marquesas, at any rate primarily, were used "in certain ceremonies"[7], which statement besides may be said to tally

[1] *R. Andree,* Ethnographische Parallelen u. Vergleiche. N. Folge, p. 99. Leipzig 1889.

[2] *Doolittle,* Social Life of the Chinese, II, p. 249.

[3] *W. Ellis,* Polynesian Researches, I, p. 309. London 1829.

[4] *W. Gill,* Life in the Southern Seas, p. 65. London 1876.

[5] *G. H. v. Langsdorff,* Bemerkungen auf einer Reise um die Welt, I, p. 146. Frankfurt a. M. 1812.

[6] *E. Marchand,* Neueste Reise um die Welt, I, p. 138. Leipzig 1802.

[7] Illustrated Catalogue of Ethnogr. Specimens No. 84, Vol. VII.

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with that of Langsdorff, according to whom they were used at festivities. The foot-rests, cut from hard dark wood, are elaborately and artistically carved (fig. 6). The stiltpoles consisted of pieces of bamboo about 2 metres long, and were occasionally provided with carved ornaments[1].

Then there naturally arises the question as to which of the uses of stilts is the original one: for practical purposes, or with mystical-ritualistic significance. Before entering upon that point, I shall, however, deal with the evidence I am in possession of from Africa and America. This is as follows:

STILTS IN AFRICA.

A. FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES.

The negroes on the Cross River in Cameroon (Ossidinge district) walk on stilts strapped to their legs, at 30 cm. above the ground, when engaged in certain agricultural pursuits: "Männer, welche in ihrer von Gras überwucherten Plantenform zu arbeiten haben, benutzen sie, weil unter dem Gras allerlei Dornen versteckt liegen und weil erfahrungsgemäss gerade in schlecht gereinigten, von Gras überwucherten Farmen sich Schlangen aufhalten"[2]. At certain festivals they use taller stilts (see B., below). This is the only practical use of stilts I know from Africa unless there may be included the following statement by Schweinfurth from the Mangbetu of the strange way in which thieves are said to dissemble their tracks in the maize fields: "Sie befestigen Krücken an ihre Schenkel, auf welchen sie unerkannt in die Majsfelder hineinsteigen können. Solche Stelzen nennen die Niam-Niam *Bal-*

[1] *O. Finsch*, Südseearbeiten, p. 548, Abh. Hamburg. Kolonialinstituts, Bd XIV, Hamburg 1914. *v. Luschan*, Zusammenhänge etc., p. 90. A pair of such stilts, complete, there are in Christy Collection, they are pictured in *Ratzel*, Völkerkunde, 1, p. 181. Pictures of foot-rests in *Ratzel*, p. 180, Handbook Brit. Mus. p. 138. *Oldman* in Man 1910: 103 and in his Illustrated Catalogue No 84, Vol. VII.

[2] *A. Mansfeld*, Urwald-Dokumente. Vier Jahre unter den Crossfluss-Negern Kameruns, p. 117, fig. 99. Berlin 1908.

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laruh"[1]. This procedure does not strike one as being particularly practical as the footprints might just as easily be made unrecognizable by wrapping something round the feet. Even if in this case it moreover may be taken for granted that the stilts are very low, the stature of the thief will nevertheless be made taller, and he would be hampered in concealing himself from anyone happening along. However it may be about this, Schweinfurth's statement constitutes a fairly striking analogy to the above related legend from New Zealand.

B. MAGICO-RITUAL USE, IN MASK-DANCES, ETC.

The majority of instances I have found of stilts being referred to from Africa fall under the above heading.

In Sierra Leone and Liberia stilts are used. Prof. Westermann has called my attention to his having, in his work on the Kpelle of Liberia[2] adduced a quotation from Ceston touching upon the use of stilts among the Mende. According to C. stilt-walking and other arts are learnt in the Poro secret society away in the bush during the initiation rites of the young people, and even if it be the case that nowadays these tricks are only performed by wandering buffoons, they once undoubtedly possessed a deeper significance. Ceston writes:

"Dans certains gree-gree une grande importance semble être attachée aux exercices d'acrobates et aux jongleries. Les Mendé par exemple, savent une foule de ces tours: "they know plenty funny things" et presque tous les baladins qui de temps en temps viennent donner séance par ici, sont des Mendé. J'en ai vu qui dansaient et gesticulaient avec une dextérité étonnante, perchés sur de longues échasses ficelées à leurs jambes. Ils renversaient violemment leur corps arrière, faisaient des sauts, etc. Leurs évolutions étaient accompagnées d'une espèce de fanfare indigène, flutes, musettes, tams-tams, tambours, anneaux aux bouts non joints, de différente grandeur et grosseur et donnant des tons

[1] *G. Schweinfurth*, Im Herzen von Afrika, II, p. 129. Leipzig 1874. About Niam-Niam cf. C below.

[2] *D. Westermann*, Die Kpelle, p. 285, Note 1. Göttingen 1921.

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différents formant accords. Les gens disaient que toutes ces choses leur avaient été apprises au gree-gree"[1].

The Vai, who are the Mende's immediate neigbours to the south, also walk on stilts. In the writings of H. Johnston, and above all in those of Büttikofer — who describes their ritual dances in detail — I can find no reference to stilts, but it is nevertheless clear that such are used. Vide Appendix and Plehn, Tessmann below (Cameroon, Bubi).

Professor Westermann writes me that stilts are "fairly common" in Liberia and Sierra Leone and refers me to Alldridge's work, which however is not listed in any Swedish public library[2].

Concerning the Malinke and other Mande peoples, vide Appendix.

Frobenius found stilts amont the Tommo (Tombo) in the Homburi mountains: "Bei der Gelegenheit sei noch ein anderer, anscheinend durchaus harmloser Mummenschanz erwähnt, nämlich der Tingi-Tanga. Auch diese Maskierten tanzen im Anfange der Regenzeit. Es sind Spassmacher, deren jedes Dorf an vier oder mehr besitzen soll. Die Tingi-Tanga gehen auf Stelzen und haben oft Hosen, die über die Holzstäbe bis auf den Boden fallen. Im übrigen bedecken rote Schnüre das Gesicht und fallen auch über den Körper herab. Sie kommen morgens und abends auf den Dorfplatz und führen hier ihre Sprünge und Kapriolen im Stelztanz aus. Aber jeder tanzt allein für sich. Nie tanzen zwei zusammen. Man sagt, das Spiel sei so schwierig, dass Vater und Mutter der Tanzenden zauberkräftig sein müssten, um den Tänzer vor Sturz und Beinbruch zu schützen"[3]. It seems to me very likely that these stilt-dances, as the case probably is with certain real maskdances of the Tommo, originally are old rites of fertilisation.

Among the Haussa, Staudinger observed how during the feast of Rhamadan a man on stilts impersonated various grotesque figures, partly comical, partly terrifying. The Haussa, as we know, are Mahommedans, but, as S. says: "Über das Auftreten von allerhand heidnischen Mummenschanz zur Zeit des islamitischen Rhamadan dürfen wir uns nicht wundern, denn auch bei uns sind christliche Feste zeitlich mit denen aus der alten Heidenzeit zusammengelegt worden"[4].

[1] *J. M. Ceston*, Le "Gree-Gree Bush" (Initiation de la Jeunesse) chez les Nègres-Golah, Liberia. p. 742. Anthropos 1911.

[2] *T. I. Allridge*, The Sherbro and its Hinterland. London 1901.

[3] *L. Frobenius*, Spielmanns-Geschichten der Sahel. Atlantis VI, pp. 276 sq. Jena 1921.

[4] Zeitschrift f. Ethnologie 1904, p. 727.

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About a statement from the Yoruba, vide Appendix.

In old-time Benin stilts were used, as is evident from the bronze plaques, albeit among them perhaps not more than one is known with a stilt-walker for a motive (fig. 7). It is a large, beautiful plaque showing a man dressed in a garment reaching to his feet, and with a sword of the so-called *"ada"* type in his hand. Read and Dalton are undecided as to whether the man actually is standing on stilts, or whether the two projections under the bottom hem of the jerkin are representing his feet or his knees[1]. Von Luschan certainly also finds it "striking" that the man is not supporting himself on a stick, but on the other hand he very properly points out that it is quite feasible to walk without the aid of a stick on stilts that are well tied on, and adduces three examples to prove that this is practiced in other parts of West Africa. For his own part he has no doubt of the objects being stilts[2]. I entirely agree with his opinion and would in further confirmation refer to the evidence I have here set forth as to existence of stilts in West Africa, the two examples next following having been obtained just from Southern Nigeria. Although there is nothing in the appointments of the Benin man that might be used in proof of his appearance being connected with any rite, such is nevertheless undoubtedly the case, in accordance with what is otherwise known of the use of stilts in those parts of West Africa. The very fact of the man not using any support also lends colour to a ritualistic significance.

As has been mentioned, there are stilts in the close vicinity of Benin. Talbot says of the Ijaw, a Sudanese tribe in the Niger delta, and of the Ekoi, a semi-Bantu tribe just to the west of the Cross river: "In some 'plays', especially those in honour of the ancestors and the gods, stilts are used, as among the Ekoi, where their name, Abia Nkpaw, is the same as that of the king of the skulls in their folklore. These are also employed by Ijaw in the sacred dance in honour of their principal land juju, Awome-Ka-So"[3].

A more detailed account from the Ekoi gives Talbot in his previous work: "Another carefully guarded mystery was the art of walking on

[1] *C. H. Read & O. M. Dalton,* Antiquities from the City of Benin, p. 53, Pl. XX, 5. London 1899.

[2] *von Luschan,* Die Altertümer von Benin, p. 238, fig. 369. Berlin 1919.

[3] *P. Amaury Talbot,* The People of Southern Nigeria, III, p. 794. Oxford 1926.

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stilts (Ekoi "Abia-Nkpaw" or "Abum-bum"), which no woman was allowed to see. The origin of the custom was obligingly written down for me in the following words:

"In the olding Oban town, there was once an old man named Awo Ntui Ane (Awo the Chief of Men). He been working in his farm, where he been plant the yams. One of the day, he find, the earth very hot with the sun, especially in the dry season. He cut a very piece of stick and put them in his feet. One of his sons named Itafaha Egbise saw, and when they get home he called his friend named Itaneni, and said, 'Here what my father been doing to-day in his farm'."

By these first stilts the feet were only raised a few inches from the ground, but the height was gradually increased, till now a good performer can walk on a level with the heads of the spectators.

On New Year's Day, 1910, a particulary interesting "stilt play" was given. There were four principal performers, each thickly veiled, among them one with only one stilt, very short, and bound round his right leg in such a way as to make him limp like a cripple. In him we recognised the "Lame Boy", the "Good Fairy" of Ekoi tales. The heads of several of the minor characters were bound with wreaths, from which depended, so as to cover the ears, leaves of the Piper plant, sacred to the ghosts. It is curious that the name for stilts, Abia-Nkpaw, is that of the giant King of the Skulls, mentioned on page 275. We gathered that the play was in honour of the ghosts, and that the other principal characters were Obassi Osaw and Obassi Nsi"[1] (fig. 9).

Most likely stilts are used also by other peoples on the lower Niger. In his Ibo vocabulary Thomas has, from Onitsha, the word *ekeneke* (stilts), although he does not mention them in the letter-press[2]. The neighbours of the Ekoi to the east are the abovementioned tribes of the late German territory on the Cross river where, besides the Keaka and Banyangi, and other minor tribes, also live the Ekoi. Stilt-walking is here called *Awumbum*, or *Awiangbo* (obviously the same word as *Abia Nkpaw* just mention above): "Bei Vollmondtänzen oder zu Totenfestlichkeiten binden sich einige Leute 1—1,50 m. hohe Stelzen an die Beine; wie aus Abb. 99 zu ersehen wird die Stange in ihrem oberen

[1] *P. Amaury Talbot*, In the Shadow of the Bush, p. 284, 2 photos. London 1912.

[2] *N. W. Thomas*, Anthropological Report of the Ibo-speaking Peoples of Nigeria, II, pp. 88, 175. London 1913.

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Teile bis auf die Mitte der ursprünglichen Stärke abgetragen und an den Unterschenkeln vermittelst Bastfasern festgebunden"[1].

A further statement about the Banyangi and their neighbours gives Conrau: "Bei den Balung, Bafo, Bakundu und ihren Nachbarn bestehen überall geheime Fetischverbindungen, in die sich die Leute einkaufen können. Sie maassen sich viele Vorrechte an und bedrücken die Leute, die nicht den Verbindungen angehören. Von Zeit zu Zeit feiern sie Festlichkeiten mit Tanz, wobei einige Personen in ein netzartig gestricktes Kleidungsstück gesteckt werden, das ähnlich so wie der Fellanzug der Eskimos angefertigt ist. Strümpfe, Hose, Hemd, Kappe sind in einem Stück vereinigt. Auch Stelzen werden benutzt, um diesen Personen eine übermenschliche Grösse zu verleihen. Bei den Banyang sah ich einst einen derart verkleideten Mann, der sich noch einen künstlichen Kopf aufgesetzt hatte. Ein langes Stück Zeug verdeckte die Stelzen, und die Gestalt eines Riesen war recht gut dargestellt"[2].

About stilts among the Wute vide Appendix.

In Duala too, as in the surrounding country, there are, or formerly existed, walkers on stilts, men called *mbomako,* who formed a kind of secret society. "Sie sind in Dualla selbst gegenwärtig nicht mehr vertreten, wohl aber in der *Ndonga-niederlassung* und vereinzelt auf dem rechten Kamerunflussufer in *Bonaberi* und *Dibombari.* Das Abzeichen ist eine Stelze, als konkreter Ausdruck für die "Grösse" — nicht nur für die physische Grösse — der Bundesangehörigen (vielmehr in dem Sinne, in welchem der Küstenneger das englische "big" gebraucht). Doch verstehen keineswegs alle Bundesangehörigen das Stelzenlaufen, sondern nur einige wenige. Die Stelzen werden am Unterschenkel festgebunden und sind etwa $1^1/_2$ m. hoch. Es gelang mir nicht, Stelzen zu erhalten, und ich berichte nur nach zuverlässigen Angaben. Ich habe speziell darnach gefragt, ob denn etwa auch die Stelzen demjenigen vor das Haus gelegt wurden, von welchem die Stelzengänger etwas Bestimmtes forderten, und erhielt eine ganz bestimmt bejahende Antwort. Es wird aber nur eine Stelze hingelegt. Kinder sieht man in Kamerun öfters zum Vergnügen auf kleinen Stelzen gehen. Als ich einmal nachts bei Mondschein einen Krankenbesuch machen musste, geriet ich unter einen Haufen grotesk vermummter Gestalten, die sich auf einen freie-

[1] *Mansfeld,* loc. cit.

[2] *G. Conrau,* Einige Beiträge über die Völker zwischen Mpundu und Bali, p. 196. Mitteil. aus d. D. Schutzgeb., Bd XI. Berlin 1898.

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ren Platz bei der üblichen Negermusik vergnügten, und in deren Mitte ein ebenfalls verhüllter Stelzengänger umhersprang. Als die Leute den Europäer erkannten, stoben sie mit Geschrei auseinander und verschwanden. Ich hörte nachher, es seien Weineger aus Liberia gewesen, die als Arbeiter und Soldaten nach Kamerun kommen. Ich glaube das auch, den der Gebrauch von Stelzen bei solchen Spielfestlichkeiten scheint an der Westküste sehr verbreitet zu sein. Um Dualla handelte es sich diesmal jedenfalls nicht. Der Eintritt in den Bund der Stelzengänger steht in Kamerun Freien und Sklaven frei"[1].

Fig. 11 shows a pair of stilts from Dualla, with a coat of European paint, belonging to the Berlin Museum. They are called *miende ma m'bo mako* and are remarked upon in the museum's catalogue as follows: "Werden, mit Bast an den Unterschenkeln befestigt, bei Leichenfeierlichkeiten benutzt". (Information supplied by Professor Dr. Schachtzabel, to whom I am also indebted for the photograp)[2].

Plehn mentions Ndonga which, as Prof. Struck has informed me, is the most western part of the Basa country. According to Schürle the Basa word for stilts is *naga, minaga* (< *nagal*)[3].

There is yet another piece of information from the coastland of Cameroon, very interesting and hitherto unpublished, for which my thanks are due to the well-known Cameroon veteran, mr Knut Knutson, Stockholm. In 1888 he chanced to be present at one of the *ekalé* festivities of the Bomboko, a kind of commemoration feast in celebration of the first occupation by the tribe of their present district on the northern slope of the Cameroon Mountain. Times is counted by generations and those occupation festivals were held at certain intervals. Among other things, there was a masked man appearing on stilts which he, by means of ingenious sliding arrangements consisting of constructions made of light wood, was able to make higher or lower in walking, by 4 to 5 feet at a time, even up to a total height of 25 feet. With great skill the stilt-walker manoevered his enveloping garment, which was provided with head-piece and sleeves, whilst bowing and twisting his body in different directions. The stilts proper, which may have been

[1] *A. Plehn,* Beobachtungen in Kamerun, p. 714. Zeitschr. f. Ethn. 1904.

[2] A drawing of one of these stilts is found in v. Luschan's 'Die Altertümer von Benin', fig. 371.

[3] *G. Schürle,* Die Sprache d. Basa in Kamerun. Grammatik u. Wörterbuch, p. 274. Hamburg 1912.

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4 or 5 feet in length, were lashed to his legs. The stilts, as well as the masks were kept in a special house, that of the priest — the Bomboko not possessing any juju houses. There were three kinds of medicine men viz., (1) priests, in a stricter sense, (2) witch-doctors whose business it was to accuse witches, and (3) physicians. It was a member of the first category who was responsible for the safe keeping of the stilts, a circumstance favouring the supposition that the stilts were used in some religious observance. Knutson did not succeed in eliciting any explanation as to what the stilt-walker was supposed to represent.

During a course of years Mr. Knutson witnessed many *ekalé* feasts, but the one above referred to was the only one at which stilts were used. Possibly this was owing to its especial character as a festival of commemoration. On the other hand I think I aught to mention that the year of 1888, according to Knutson, was "the worst year for rain" in all his long experience of Cameroon, with immense inundations. With these, it is not impossible that the stilt-walking had some connection, it might be with the idea of in some way to put a stop to the incessant raining. By the way I may here mention a parallel case which just occurs to me, namely how among the Akamba in the Kenya Colony, when the flagstaff at the Government station at Kitui was raised, the natives believed that this long thing that pointed straight up into the air would certainly keep the rains away[1]. Compare also the example from India given above.

On the Ogowe river, stilts seem to be used among several tribes by members of secret societies, or of masked individuals at feasts. "In the Uda society ["Uda" is certainly a misprint for Nda] in the region around the mouth of the Ogowe, the representer of the forest spirit increases his stature in this way"[2]. The correctness of this statement may possibly be questioned, as Wilson does not make any mention of the *Nda* using stilts. But he does speak of stilts from these parts (from the Mpongwe, probably) in another connection: "There is still another association called *Kuhkwi*, which, however, combines neither the secrecy nor sacredness of either of the other two which have just been described, the society of the men, *nda*, and that of the women, *njembe*. It is, indeed, a sort of theatrical affair, intended more as a public amusement

[1] *G. Lindblom*, The Akamba, p. 224. Upsala 1920.

[2] Meyers Conversationslexikon. art. Stelzen. Cf. *Frobenius*, Die Masken u. Geheimbünde Afrikas, p. 62. Halle 1898.

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than anything else. From a queer-looking house, built chiefly of reeds and leaves, issues a man with a most hideous mask, mounted upon a pair of stilts which makes his whole figure ten or twelve feet high. The mask is immensely large, and presents one of the most hideous faces that can be conceived. He carries a sword in his hand, with which he occasionally menaces the by-standers as he stalks about like a giant in the open space. He is always surrounded by half a dozen or more young men who sing and clap their hands, and are always ready to hold him up, in case he trips or breaks his leg. His gait is most unseemly and grotesque; and when you couple with this the hideousness of the mask, it is not surprising that the women and children always give way as he approaches the place where they are"[1].

An earlier mention — from Cape Lopez, and probably from Urungu — is made by Boteler, who attended a "fetiche dance". As the description he gives is of great interest, I venture, in spite of its length, to quote in extenso the part referring to stilts: "forthwith rushed from the house among the dancers a most extraordinary figure. It was a man mounted on stilts at least six feet above the ground, of which, from practice, he had acquired so great a command, that he certainly was as nimble in his evolutions as the most active among the dancers. He was sometimes so quick that one stilt could hardly be seen to touch the earth before it was relieved by the other. Even when standing still. he often balanced himself so well as not to move either stilt for the space of two or three minutes. He wore a white mask, with a large red ball on each cheek, the same on his chin, and his eyebrows and the lower part of his nose were painted with the same colour. Over his forehead was a sort of vizor, of a yellow colour, having across it a line of small brass bells: it was armed in front by long alligators' teeth, and terminated in a confused display of feathers, blades of grass, and the stiff hairs of elephants and other large animals. From the top of his head the skin of a monkey hung pendent behind, having affixed to its tail a wire and a single elephant's hair, with a large sheep's bell attached to the end. The skin was of a beautiful light green, with the head and neck of a rich vermilion. From his shoulders a fathom of blue dungaree, with a striped white border, hung down behind; and his body, legs and arms were completely enshrouded in a number of folds of the

[1] *J. L. Wilson*, Western Africa, p. 397. London 1856. Cf. *Frobenius*, Masken, p. 64 and *Struck*, Appendix. The work of *Barret*, I have not at hand.

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native grass-cloth, through which he grasped in each hand a quantity of alligators' teeth, lizards' skins, fowls' bones, feathers, and stiff hairs, reminding me strongly of the well-known attributes of Obi, the dread of the slave-owners of Jamaica.

The fetiche never spoke. When standing still he held his arms erect, and shook and nodded his head with a quick repetition: but, when advancing, he extended them to their full length before him. In the former case, he appeared as if pointing to heaven, and denouncing its vengeance on the dancers and the numerous bystanders around; and in the latter, as one who, finding his exhortations of no avail, was resolved to exterminate, in the might of his gigantic stature and superior strength, the refractory set. The master fetiche was his constant attendant, always following, doubling, and facing him, with exhortations, uttered at one minute in the most beseeching tone, accompanied hat in hand by obsequious bows, and, in the next, by threatening gestures and violent passionate exclamations. The attendant on the master fetiche was likewise constantly at hand with his stick applied to his mouth, and, in one or two instances, when the masquerader approached, he crouched close under him, and squirted the red juice of the root he was chewing into his face.

For upwards of an hour I watched the dance, yet the fetiche appeared untired; and I afterwards heard that the same ceremony was performed every day, and sometimes lasted three or four hours. I at first thought that it was merely got up for our amusement, but was soon undeceived; and when, under the first impression, I inquired of a bystander what man it was who performed the character, he answered, with a mixture of pique at the question and astonishment at my ignorance, "He no man; no man do same as him; e be de diable, e be de devil". Still I was a little sceptic as to their really holding this belief themselves, though they insisted on the fact as they represented it to me; and therefore, after I had received the same answer from all, I used to add in a careless way, to try their sincerity: "In what house does he dwell?" "What! what! Fetiche, I tell you, be devil; e no catch house; e lib (live) in dat wood", pointing to a gloomy-looking grove skirting the back of the village. It was in vain that I attempted to unravel the origin or meaning of this superstition: to all my questions the only answer I could obtain was, that such was the fashion of the country — a reason which they always had at hand when puzzled, as they always were when the

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subject related to any of their numerous superstitions. The fact is, that these practices still remain, though their origin has long since been buried in oblivion"[1].

Even if Boteler, as we have seen, did not succeed in acquiring any clear insight into what was the nature of the festival, he witnessed, or as to what the stilt-walking signified, he is certainly correct in concluding that there was some ancient rite practiced, although its original significance had become obscured.

From the "Apono"[2] south of lower Ogowe, Du Chaillu describes a masked figure on stilts: "They are very fond of the *occuya*-performances. The occuya is a man supporting a large framework resembling a giant, and whimsically dressed and ornamented, who walks and dances on stilts. In Mokaba he appears in a white mask with thick open lips... The long garnment reaches to the ground covering the stilts"[3].

The masked *mukish* figure among the Kioko (more properly Vatchivokwe) who, judging from different authors appears to exercise several functions — partly a purely comical figure for the amusement of the people, partly of deeper import in connection with circumcision[4] — used to appear on stilts, although not always. Capello and Ivens saw such a one "who walked upon long stilts" (fig. 10), but at the same time they noticed another one without any stilts[5]. Schütt describes a *mukish* from the Minungo who, in connection with the circumcision of the boys, was stalking about the bush and inspired awe into the assembled crowd by his conjuring tricks[6]:

"Kaum hatten wir Rast gemacht, so erschien der nahewohnende Häuptling *Mona Mussongo* ..... Bald nach ihm kamen unter grossem Jubel unserer Leute zwei "M'Quichi", die ich schon weiter oben beschrieben, an; diese tanzen recht phantastisch und geschickt und zeigten

[1] *Th. Boteler*, Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery to Africa and Arabia, II, p. 374 sq., frontispiece. London 1835.

[2] Prof. Struck has informed me that the Apono are identical with the Apinji.

[3] *Du Chaillu*, A Journey to Ashangoland, p. 260. New York 1867.

[4] Vide *Frobenius*, Die Masken etc., pp. 35 sq, 661. According to Buchner, the *mukish* (pl. *akish*) is a kind of "waldteufel", i. e. a woodspirit, whilst Wissmann has, it that he also performs certain useful jobs, such as making rain cease, warding off threatening storms, etc.

[5] *H. Capello and R. Ivens*, From Benguella to the Territory of Yacca, I, p. 295. London 1882.

[6] *O. Schütt*, Reisen im südwestl. Becken des Congo, pp. 106, 116. Berlin 1881. *Frobenius*, p. 39.

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uns denn auch sogleich ihre Kunst. In langer Reihe standen unsere Leute dabei, sangen mit zur Trommel und gaben reiche Gaben an Perlen, Pulver, Zeug usw. Unaufhörlich führten denn auch die beiden ihre tollen Sprünge aus, dabei bittend die Hände ausstreckend, und immer von neuem rannten unsere Leute vor und gaben ihnen, was sie nur entbehren konnten. Zuletzt zeigte sich der eine M'Quichi gar als Zauberer. Er hielt sich fern von den Leuten am Rande der Lichtung auf, wo er im Rücken ein kleines Gebüsch hatte, und warf mit grotesken Gebärden Blätter vor sich auf den Boden. "Plötzlich" lag dort ein nackter "Leichnam", der natürlich schon geraume Zeit unbeachtet im Grase gelegen hat; dieser — bei 600 Meter Entfernung war er nicht genau zu erkennen — richtet sich auf und legt sich wieder. Alle Zuschauer fühlten sich durch dieses wunderbare Experiment auf das tiefste bewegt und juchzen, mit der Hand auf den Mund schlagend. Der eine M'Quichi tanzt nun wieder vor, kehrt dann um und nachdem er Blätter auf den angeblichen Toten gestreut, erhebt sich dieser als Schaf und kriecht sehr unschafartig in den Wald. Die ganz gut erkennbaren, hinten vorstehenden Beine störten die tiefe Ueberzeugung der staunenden und verwunderten Neger keineswegs und niemand von ihnen hätte sich getraut, das Wunder näher zu untersuchen. Später setzte der M'Quichi seine Zaubereien fort, indem er in dem Gebüsch Tote storchartig auf *Stelzen* herumsteigen liess und auch das Schaffell noch einige Male zum Vorscheine brachte."

Among the Anyanja and the Angoni, west of Lake Nyasa, it was customary to have a dance called *zingau*, "after a funeral on a moonless night or before the moon is up". The dancers are members of a secret society, disguised as various animals. "Candidates for admission to it in old days had to undergo a variety of ordeals ... amongst other thing the novice was set up on very high stilts"[1]. Concerning the Asimba, southwest of the Angoni of southern Nyasaland, vide Appendix. Livingstone saw a man on stilts at the northwestern corner of Lake Bangveolo: "We went down to Masantu's village, which is on the shore of the lake... Here we had as a spectator a man walking on stilts tied to his ankles and his knees. There are a great many Babisa among

[1] *Frazer*, Totemism and Exogamy, II, p. 399. London 1910 (after *R. Sutherland Rattray*, Some Folklore Stories and Songs in Chinyanya, pp. 178 sq.). *A. Werner*, Man 1909, p. 139.

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the people"[1]. The population of Masantu is, according to Struck, a mixted one, Babisa-Mbozhwa (Vide Appendix).

From the Makonde in the south-eastern portion of the Tanganyika Territory, Weule describes masked stilt-walkers who at the boys' initiation festivals (*unyago*) appeared together with other masked dancers without stilts. The stilts were tied fast to the legs. Being of a total height of 3 metres, with a wooden mask for a face and completely covered with cotton cloth (with which also the stilts were draped), these figures were meant to strike the onlookers with dread, "besonders bei den mannbarwerdenden der weiblichen Geschlecht". At the puberty festivals of the girls there also appeared, at the final stage, a stilt-walker. All the masked dancers were youths, from 16 to 20 years of age[2]. As to whether the masked dances were indigenous to the Makonde or not, W. was not able to find out. He does not mention them from the neighbouring tribes of the Yao or the Makua, but according to Meyers Konversationslexikon (see above), stilts would occur also among these tribes, a statement for which I have found no corroboration, but which appears probable.

Another statement for which I have not either been able to find anything in the way of proof, is that of the Wanyamwezi also using stilts[3].

In East Ukamba (Kitui district), Kenya Colony, in former times a dance is said to have existed in which a kind of stilts were used, with the dancer's feet about half a metre above the ground[4]. This was stated to me in 1911 by Mr. Säuberlich, the missionary at Mulango, whose experience of the eastern Akamba was of many years' standing. In West Ukamba (Machakos' District) this dance does not seem to have existed, I, at any rate, not having been able to trace anything of the kind, nor has Mr. Johnston, the missionary, been more successful in the investigations he some months ago kindly undertook at my request.

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[1] Livingstone's Last Journals, I, p. 314. London 1874.

[2] *K. Weule,* Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse meiner ethnogr. Forschungsreise in d. Südosten Deutsch-Ostafrikas, pp. 112, 113—114, 121, taf. 42, 46. Berlin 1908. *Weule,* Negerleben in Ostafrika, p. 290. Leipzig 1909.

[3] *R. Andree,* Ethnographische Parallelen und Vergleiche, II, p. 100. Leipzig 1889. Description not given as to the way the stilts were used (from Steere, in Journ. Anthr. Soc. I, p. CL., a volume to which I have not had access). *Reichard* (Die Wanjamuesi, p. 254, Zeitschr. d. Ges. f. Erdkunde zu Berlin, 1889) describes in detail children's games, but makes no mention of stilts.

[4] *Lindblom,* The Akamba, p. 413.

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On the other hand, stilts as playthings used by children are found among the Wadjagga on Kilimanjaro (Cf. below).

Lastly, of the Lango, the Nilotic tribe of Uganda, Driberg says that stilts *(ajagi)* "are occasionally used by men at dances"[1]. But unfortunately he does not say in what kind of dances they are used.

C. STILTS AS CHILDREN'S PLAYTHINGS.

The Ewe word for stilts, *katakladugbea,* Westermann translates as "in the way of a toy"[2]. From Cameroon, as we have already seen, Flehn mentions that children walk on stilts for their amusement. The locality he does not specify. Among Pangwe boys stilt-walking is a popular pastime (fig. 12). "Ein beliebtes Sonntagsnachmittagsvergnügen ist bei den Kindern und sogar Jünglingen das Stelzenlaufen (*a wulu bondomo*). Die Stelzen (*ndomo* I Nt., *andomo* III F) sind roh aus Stämmchen des Schirmbaumes *Musanga Smithii* R. Br. *(asoin)* geschnitzt"[3] About the Yaunde and the Ntum, vide Appendix. In Fernando Poo the Bubi boys walk on stilts, but, according to Tessmann, "sind sie von den Monrovia-Leuten eingeführt"[4]. This may possibly be the case, but nevertheless seems to me an unnecessarily roundabout way, seeing that stilts are used in the mainland of Cameroon, directly opposite.

In several parts of the Congo stilts are no doubt used by boys. In reply to my question, Dr. K. E. Laman has told me that among the Bakongo in the lower Belgian Congo one may occasionally see children jump on stilts made from the limb of a tree, provided with a suitably projecting branch which is cut off and serves as a foot-rest[5]. In the Kasai-Sankuru basin, among the Sungu[6] and the "Baluba"[7], the boys

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[1] *J. H. Driberg,* The Lango, p. 127. London 1923.

[2] *D. Westermann,* Wörterbuch d. Ewe-Sprache, I, p. 252. Berlin 1906.

[3] *G. Tessmann,* Die Kinderspiele der Pangwe. Baessler Arch. 2, p. 254 (with fig.). Leipzig 1912. See also *Tessmann,* Die Pangwe II, p. 294. Berlin 1913.

[4] *Tessmann,* Die Bubi auf Fernando Poo, p. 159. Darmstadt 1923.

[5] Dr. Laman writes me that in Kikongo a stilt is called *kiendolo kianti* (pl. *biendolo*), from *kwendila,* "to walk with", a form of the verb *kuenda,* "to walk". Hence "to walk on stilts": *kwenda mu biendolo bianti. Weeks,* in his description of games and sports from the lower Congo, does not mention stilts (Folklore XX, p. 457. London 1901), and *Bentley* does not include the word in his Congo Dictionary.

[6] *E. Torday et T. A. Joyce,* Notes Ethnographiques sur des Populations habitant les Bassins du Kasai et du Kwango Oriental, pp. 55, 56 (photo). Annales du Musée du Congo Belge. Bruxelles 1922.

[7] *H. Wissmann,* Im Innern Afrikas, p. 80. Leipzig 1888. Cf. Appendix.

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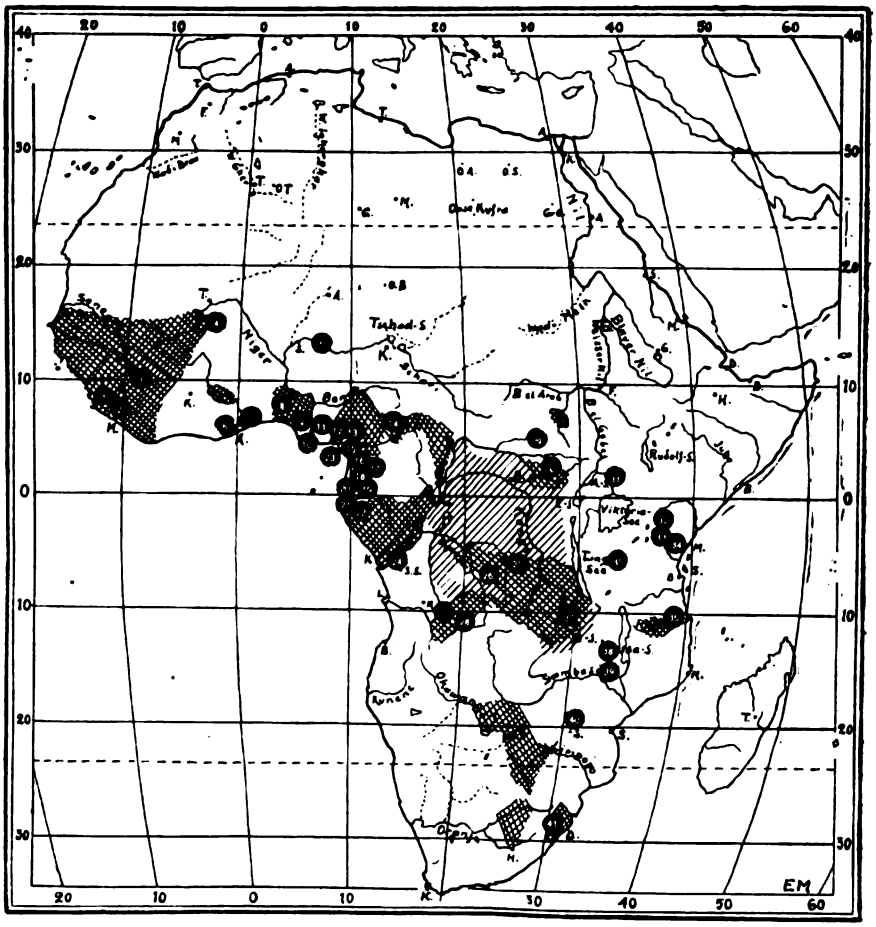

Fig. 2. Distribution of stilts in Africa.

The lined areas indicates the approximate distribution of masks in Africa, after Frobenius 1898. (On this map I had originally intended to employ different signs to denote stilts used for play or otherwise (in dances, etc.), but as in many cases particulars as to their use are lacking, I have not been able to carry out this plan).

1. Mende. 2. Vai. 3. Malinke (Mandingo). 4. Tommo. 5. Haussa. 6. Accra. 7. Ewe. 8. Yoruba. 9. Benin. 10. Ijaw. 11. Ibo. 12. Ekoi. 13. Banyangi, etc. 14. Wute. 15. Duala, etc. 16. Basa. 17. Yaunde. 18. Ntum. 19. Fang. 20. Mpongwe. 21. Urungu. 22. Apinji. 23. Bubi. 24. Bakongo. 25. Sungu. 26. Bena Luluwa ("Baluba"). 27. Minungo. 28. Vatchivokwe. 29. Azandeh (Niam-Niam). 30. Mangbetu. 31. Lango. 32. Akamba. 33. Wadjagga. 34. Washambaa. 35. Wanyamwezi. 36. Makonde. 37. Babisa-Mbozhwa. 38. Anyanja, Angoni. 39. Asimba. 40. Makalaka. 41. Zulu, etc.

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tie short stilts to their legs below the knee. Among the former at any rate, the foot is supported on a shallow step carved into the stilt. The Azandeh (Niam-Niam) children have stilts (Appendix).

The Kafir boys, Zulus and others, "sometimes make rough stilts, either by fixing a piece of wood on to a pole, or else by making notches in the pole"[1]. Mauch, the rediscoverer of the Zimbabwe ruins, quite briefly refers to stilt-walking as a pastime for boys among the Makalaka[2]. Gutman says the same thing of the Wadjagga boys[3].

The data brought together in the foregoing as to the use of stilts in Africa are undoubtedly capable of being further somewhat completed. Thus Frobenius speaks of them from Accra[4], and, to judge from the statements given above, stilts may exist among more tribes in Sierra Leone and Liberia. In broad outline, however, the distribution here established (fig. 2) will fairly accurately represent the occurence of stilts in Africa.

*

When I took up this little investigation, which to begin with only had Africa for its object, I was a priori almost convinced that stilts were originally only used for practical purposes. The idea of using stilts would presumably not be far to seek, and their invention cannot be said to call for any inordinate exertion of the human brain. It is however astonishing to find that, after all, merely utilitarian application of stilts is non-existent in Africa, the instance above given from the Cross river being, I consider — after having generally surveyed the subject — only a secondary one, and nothing but a derivation from the ritualistic use obtaining among those tribes. Furthermore, it seems to me, due importance should be attached to the circumstance that the occurrence of stilts in Africa closely coincides with the occurrence of masks and more or less secret societies, in the way indicated by Frobenius. In fig. 2. I have accordingly, from him, put in the occurence of masks in Africa, for the sake of comparison. The exceptions are, pro-

[1] *D. Kid,* Savage Childhood, A Study of Kafir Children, p. 171. London 1906.

[2] Carl Mauchs Reisen im Inneren von Süd-Afrika 1865—72. Petermanns Mitteilungen, Erg.-Heft N. 37, p. 39. Gotha 1874.

[3] *B. Gutmann,* Kinderspiele bei den Wadschagga, p. 301. Globus 1909 (95).

[4] *Frobenius,* Ursprung d. Afrikanischen Kulturen, p. 362. Vide also Appendix.

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perly speaking, only the Wanyamwezi, Washambaa, Wadjagga, Akamba, Lango and Azandeh. Of the Wadjagga it may however be said that H. Johnston asserts that among them he has seen warriors with masks[1], a thing which always struck me as very improbable, but which in this connection perhaps appears in a different light, or at least becomes worthy of recording. Among the Wadjagga it is only the children who walk on stilts, and it may be conceivable that the practice is a survival from a time when masked dances were customary with the people. Kilimanjaro, it is true, is very far removed from the known area of distribution of masks, but mountain regions, as is well known, not infrequently present cultural peculiarities there surviving, whilst they have become extinct in neighbouring districts. The Akamba are closely akin to the Wadjagga, and Kamba colonies are found at the foot of Kilimanjaro, at Lake Jipe, etc. Some Akamba say that the tribe formerly lived in the country round about Kilimandjaro, an opinion also advanced by Krapf[2]. Unfortunately Frobenius' statement that in war the Akamba used to wear a "leather mask" is a misinterpretation of his source, i. e. Hildebrandt, as otherwise that statement would have suited my purpose excellently in this connection. What H. says is that the Wanyika "wear a leather mask as a warlike ornament", but as to what he in this case means by a mask I am at a loss to understand[3]. As regards the Lango, they are supposed to have arrived in their present country from the north, hence from somewhere nearer the Bongo, who are a Nilotic tribe possessing masks, although it must be admitted that only a single one (a wooden mask) is known from them (through W. Junker)[4]. The Bongo are neighbours of the Niam-Niam, who are acquainted with the stilts that Schweinfurth describes from the Mangbetu (see above), and who also use stilts themselves.

Another detail that also perhaps should be taken into account is whether the stilts are fastened to the lower leg or not. In 11 of the above cited cases (Mende, Benin, Ekoi and other tribes of the Cross river, Dualla region, Bomboko, Mpongwe, Sungu, "Baluba", Babisa, Makonde) they are tied on in such a way that the stilt-walker has his

[1] *Frobenius*, p. 35.

[2] Vide *Lindblom*, p. 14.

[3] *J. M. Hildebrandt*, Ethnographische Notizen über Wakamba und ihre Nachbaren, p. 358. Zeitschr. f. Ethnol. 1878.

[4] *Frobenius*, p. 83.

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hands free, which is a matter of importance when he is to gesticulate or has to manipulate his disguise. And it is only masked dances that are concerned in all these cases, except the Sungu and the "Baluba", but the fact of the children of these tribes possessing stilts appears to me suggestive of those contrivances having at some earlier period been ritually used by the said peoples. In 22 cases (Vai, Malinke, Tommo, Hausa, Yoruba, Ewe, Ibo, Ijaw, Wute, Bubi, Apinji, Bakongo, Minungo, Kafir, Makalaka, Asimba, Anyanja and Angoni, Wanyamwezi, Wadjagga, Akamba, Lango, Azandeh) no description of the stilts is given — at least I do not know any —, although there is justification for presuming that in some of these cases it is a question of stilts tied on to the legs. In only two cases is it mentioned that the stilts are controlled with the hands, viz. of the Pangwe and the Vachivokwe. There is, however, some uncertainty as regards the lastmentioned tribe, the sole source of information being the drawing in Capello & Iven's book, and there is a possibility of its being incorrect (sketches in earlier works being, as we know, not infrequently rather unreliable). If however correct it would constitute the only case I ever heard of in which a masked stilt-walker does not have his hands free. There is, possibly, an alternative which might be taken account of: walking on stilts without any support for the hands no doubt requires a great deal of expertness, and it is of course conceivable that the person who appeared at the festival at which the two travellers were present was not sufficiently trained for him to walk on stilts without support.

The distribution of stilts in Africa, as well as the ways of walking on them (strapped to the legs), thus indicates that, within that continent, they originally possessed a mystico-ritualistic significance, and that their use was associated with masked dances or other kinds of rites. The examples from Europe, Asia, and the South Pacific, given in the foregoing cannot be said to oppose this theory even if not all of them actually support it. Those regions of Africa where stilts only occur as the toys of children, largely coincide with the distribution of masks, wherefore this mode of using stilts may be looked upon as a "survival", and thus classifiable as coming under the general rules applicable to children's toys.

Let us in conclusion glance at America and see how matters stand as regards stilts.

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STILTS IN AMERICA.

That the Negro slaves among many other things also introduced stilts into the New World is evident from the following example from the Windward islands (the town of Calliagua, on St. Vincent), whence Bryan Edwards describes "Christmas gambols", acted by negroes in festal attire:

"Returning to the villa, we were greeted by a party which frightened the boys. It was the *Moco Jumbo* and his suite. Jumbo was on stilts, with a head, mounted on the actor's head, wich was concealed. The music was from two baskets, like strawberry baskets, with little bells within, shook in time. The swordsman danced with an air of menace, the musician was comical, and Jumbo assumed the "antic terrible", and was very active on his stilts"[1]. The Arawaks of the West Indies were unacquainted with stilts, so I am informed by Dr. S. Lovén, the well-known authority on ancient Taino civilization.

If we turn to the Indians of South America, we find that Koch-Grünberg mentions stilts used in play among the Siusí of north-western Brazil[2], E. Nordenskiöld mentions them from the Cavina of N. E. Bolivia, from the Ashluslay of the Chaco, and from the Araucanians[3]. Makusi boys amuse themselves on stilts. "Carib lads are also said to have indulged in the sport on the Pomeroon in the early days"[4].

Extensive knowledge as to the occurence of stilts in South America is of course necessary before one might venture to draw any conclusions, but in any case I wish to point out that masked dances occur in North-West Brazil as well as in the Chaco, at least among the Chamakoko who, it is true, live a considerable distance away from the Ashluslay[5].

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[1] *Bryan Edwards*, The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies, III, p. 258. London 1807. The author says: "without doubt the Moco Jumbo of the Mandengoes. Vide Park's Travels, c. 3, p. 39". To this I would only add that a dressed-up figure, called *Mama-dyumbo* (identical with Mumbo Jumbo, or Mahamma Jambo) plays a part at the circumcision festivals of the Kassonke on the middle Senegal. *C. Monteil*, Les Khassonké, pp. 227 et seq. Paris 1915. I have not seen it stated that these African Jumbo figures used stilts, but it is very likely that so is the case.

[2] *Koch-Grünberg*, Zwei Jahre unter den Indianern, 1, p. 119. Stuttgart 1910.

[3] *E. Nordenskiöld*, The Ethnography of South-America seen from Mojos in Bolivia, p. 186, fig. 39. Göteborg 1924.

[4] *W. E. Roth*, An Introductory Study of the Arts, Crafts, and Customs of the Guiana Indians, p. 497. 38th An. Rep. Bur. Amer. Ethn. Washington 1924.

[5] *P. Schmidt*, Kulturkreise und Kulturschichten in Südamerika, pp. 1060, 1073 (With bibliographical references). Zeitschr. f. Ethn. 1913.

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Although of a different character to those of Africa, it may also be mentioned that initiation rites for boys are practised in British Guiana (the Makusi, and others), among the Siusí, and by the Ashluslay and other tribes of the Chaco. The possibility should perhaps also be taken into account that stilts in Guiana, at least on the Pomeron, and also in the Mojo region, *might* have been introduced by negroes. The Indians of Guiana, in their range of game-traps — and thus probably also in other departments — present tolerably certain loans from the negroes[1].

As to the existence of stilts in America in pre-Columbian times, there is positive evidence from the Maya of Yucatan[2], who, according to Landa, used them in ritual dances during the days next preceding the *muluc* year. Landa's statement agrees with a reproduction in Codex Troano Cortesianus, and with another in the Dresden Codex, picturing the ceremonies, including the dance on stilts in the *muluc* year, which were corrective of ill-luck (fig. 8). This year was supposed to be good but in the event of misfortune special rites were performed to Yaxcocahmut (another name of the god Itzamná) including a dance on stilts and the sacrifice of dogs bearing offerings of bread[3]. What kind of god Itzamná was, is not easy to determine. According to Seler, the name was probably of a rather comprehensive application and with a differentiating adjunctive it was used for different gods. According to Joyce, who, inter alia, call him "the god of medicine (closely allied with magic)", he was possibly also associated with the moon.

To the Quiché too, of Guatemala, dancing on stilts was known. The two twin heroes, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, who had descended into the underworld in order to avenge their parents who had perished there, appeared before the rulers of the underworld disguised as jesters, and performed dances to them: "they danced the dance of the night jar, of

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[1] *Roth*, p. 177. *G. Lindblom*, Jakt- och fångstmetoder bland afrikanska folk, II, fig. 64, pp. 81, 136, 145. Stockholm 1926.

[2] For my knowledge on this point, as well as for many of the following data my thanks are due to Dr. W. Krickeberg and Dr. K. Birket-Smith.

[3] *E. Seler*. Ges Abh. zur Amer. Sprach- u. Alterthumskunde, I, pp. 383 (fig.), 387. Berlin 1902. *A. T. Joyce*, Mexican Archaeology, p. 265. London 1914. *S. Culin*, Games of the North American Indians, fig. 957. 24th An. Rep. Bur. Amer. Ethn. Washington 1907.

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the weasel, of the armadillo, of the millipede, and the stilt dance" (*chitic),* so it is recorded in Popol Vuh[1].

From the rest of North America I know of stilts from the Arikara, Wichita, Hopi, Shoshoni, and the Zuñi — in all cases as playthings for children. Among the first mentioned, "both boys and girls walked on stilts which they made from poles, leaving a stump of a fork on the side at the height they desired for a foot-rest which was bound to the thrunk piece with a wrapping of thong"[2]. Among the Hopi and the Shoshoni the stilts are of the same type as among the Arikara, and are used by boys. "The Zuñi boys frequently employ a pair of digging sticks, *Tasakwiwai,* to walk on in the manner of stilts". From the Wichita, Culin, "among terms for outdoor games", gives name for stilts as *Haki'arits* 'stilts, walking wood"[3].

In one of the myths possessed by the Alsea tribe in northwestern Oregon it is related how the coyote sent out messengers, and one of them came to a village where there was a large gathering of people who were amusing themselves in various ways: "Everything was being enacted (there): Some were spinning tops; some were playing with strings; others were spearing; some were walking on stilts; many were making poles; some were fixing chisels"[4].

The evidence of stilts from North America are all of modern dates, and therefore it might possibly be supposed that influence from the children of the white population may have been active. I consider, however, that such a supposition is not necessary, seeing that stilts existed already in pre-Columbian times, at least among the Maya. And because these, the oldest, proved instances show that they were used in ritual performances (masked dances), it appears to me very probable that in an earlier era the same thing obtained also among the North

[1] *C. E. Brasseur de Bourbourg,* Popol Vuh, le livre sacré, p. 176. Paris 1861. Concerning the names of the dances, see also *O. Stoll,* Die Ethnologie d. Indianerstämme v. Guatamala, p. 40 (Suppl. Int. Arch. f. Ethn. Leiden 1889) and *E. Pohorilles,* Das Popol Wuh, p. 58. Mytholog. Bibliothek 6. Leipzig 1913.

[2] *M. R. Gilmore,* Some Games of the Aricara Children. Indian Notes, p. 12. New York 1926.

[3] *S. Culin,* Games of the North American Indians. 24th An. Rep. Bur. Amer. Ethn., p. 731. Washington 1907. Fig. 958 shows Hopi stilts, fig. 959 Shoshoni stilts and fig 960 Zuñi digging sticks used as stilts.

[4] *Leo J. Frachtenberg,* Alsea Texts and Myths, p. 36: 13. Bur. of Amer. Ethn. Bulletin 67. Washington 1920. The Alsea word for stilts is *tskwatskwahalau.*

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American Indians. The Hopi are clever in making masks, and the Wichita were extremely given to ceremonial dances.

"Our information about the use of stilts in North America is extremely meager", Culin says, and I am afraid that even now I cannot but agree with him, but it is nevertheless probable that industrious searching would result in eliciting much additional evidence of the existence of stilts in North America. I wish to mention that in the small number of vocabularies of Indian languages I for the present have availabe in Stockholm, I have found the word for stilts from the following peoples: Klamath (*shikukangotch*), Kalispel (*ngusguisten*), Ojibway (*mitigogad*), Micmac (*kumoojugadat*)[1]. To any one interested in this subject, and with time at his disposal, a systematical gleaning of the vocabularies in this way would undoubtedly prove profitable if combined with a subsequent search through the ethnological and folklore literature on the tribes thus selected, and, if possible, with instituting investigations in the respective localities.

*

In concluding the present little study I wish to say that I do not belong to those who insist upon discovering some hidden import in most of the doings of the so-called nature peoples. On the contrary I began, as I have already mentioned, this investigation with the preconceived idea that stilts were originally employed for practical purposes. When, however, I now have before me a fairly copious material from all parts of the world, it appears that their employment for mere utility is very slight indeed and hardly to be taken into account when compared with their more or less ritual use. Everything seems to prove that, at least among more primitive peoples, the latter is the primary one. A secondary consideration would then be whether the use of stilts originally was founded upon ancient fecundity rites, or on the initiation rites of adolescence, or on something else. Here we are not, however, going to engage in any speculation on those points. A further question which obtrudes itself is the old familiar one about

[1] *A. S. Gatschet,* The Klamath Indians of Southwestern Oregon. Washington 1890. A. Dictionary of the Kalispel or Flathead Indian Language, compiled by the missionaries of the Society of Jesus. P. II. St. Ignatius Print. Montana 1877—79. *Bishop Baraga,* A Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language. Montreal 1878. *S. T. Rand,* Dictionary of the Language of the Micmac Indians. Halifax, N. S. 1888.

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"connection" ("Zusammenhang") or "convergence". The safest plan would probably be to accept the latter alternative when it is a question of implements so easily invented as stilts. Even if, e. g., in Africa the distribution of stilts may be said to coincide with that of masks, that fact does not a priori justify the assertion that the former posses a common origin, more expecially as the latter can hardly have had one. On the other hand it is undeniably rather temptating to connect stilts in America with those of the Pacific islands.

Everything notwithstanding, I am nevertheless loth to disregard the practical aspect of the use of stilts. One way would perhaps be to closely examine the geographical conditions and the types of the dwelling houses in all the regions where stilts are used. The banks of the Cross river are inudation areas, and floodings have also occurred in the Bomboko country in Cameroon. The Niger delta and the Lango country include a number of swamps. In ancient Japan pile-dwellings were in use, at the time when the population mainly subsisted as a people of fishermen (Cf. stilts in New Guinea, and the legend from New Zealand). For the present I do not, however, see my way clear to arrive at any definite conclusion on these lines, but limit myself to suggesting that the utilitarian employment of stilts should not be lost sight of.

SUPPLEMENT.

Just as this paper is going to press, the author has received one more instance of practical use of stilts. Mrs. Ida Trotzig, who has lived in Japan for about 30 years, kindly informs me that Japanese children, girls as well as boys, use stilts during the winter to keep their feet dry as the roads and streets are very muddy during this time of the year.

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APPENDIX

From a letter of 29. 5. 1927 from Prof. B. Struck to G. Lindblom.

Malinke: Abiven, Dict. Malinké S. 43 u. 171 "tūkamaxā"; nach einer pers. Mitteilung von Frobenius an mich v. 3. 3. 22. auch in anderen Mandingoländern (aber offenbar nicht bei den Bambara (Bamana).

Vai: ferner sehr schön in dem Film "Mensch und Tier im Urwald" von H. Schomburgks zweiter Liberiareise.

Akra: ich habe auch keinen anderen Beleg als Frob. Urspr. S. 362, aber ich halte dieses sicher uralte Exzerpt für wahrscheinlich richtig, da es, ohne dass sie vorkommen, im Tshi (*Mohr*, Dict. Engl.-Tshi 183) genuine Bezeichnungen gibt. Das alte und wenig vollständige Akra-Sprachmaterial lässt das Wort dort nicht finden.

Yoruba: eine schöne Abbildung (wohl nach irgend einem englischen Missionstraktat) einer "Abendunterhaltung in Abeokuta" s. Bilder-Tafeln zur Länder- und Völkerkunde hrsg. v. d. Calwer Verlags-Verein (Calw u. Stuttgart 1883), Taf. 141, Abb. 4.

Wute: "Korkosso" nach MS.—Material von Frau M. P. Thorbecke.

Balong (Ort Mpundu am Mungofluss): Buchner, Aurora colonialis S. 261.

Yaunde und Ntum: hade ich leider ohne Quelle notiert und konnte in schnellem Suchen auch keine finden; möglicherweise habe ich das Yaundevorkommen von einem Eingeborenen erfahren, da ich vor 1912 viel mit Yaundeleuten arbeitete.

Ogowe: zur grösseren Klarheit *1*) das Zitat aus Barret, L'Afrique occidentale II 168 u. 172 (= Frob. Masken 64) bezieht sich auf die *Mpongwe*, *2*) die Zitate v. Luschans und Weules aus Boteler, Narrative II 374 ff. beziehen sich auf Kap Lopez, also auf *Orungu*.

Kioque (Kioko, Vatchivokwe usw.): ferner Bastian, Fetisch an der Guineaküste S. 17.

Baluba (Wissmann-Wolf, Frobenius, v. Luschan) muss richtiger "bena Luluwa" heissen, da der Beobachtungsort Meule Kuembe zwischen Luebo und Muyau liegt, wo es kaum wirkliche Balubaeinwanderer gibt; W.-W. haben auf dieser Reise die beiden Be-

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griffe stets zusammengeworfen, wogegen Wissmann selbst später protestierte.

Asimba (zwischen Sambesi und Angoniland): mündliche Mitteilung von P. P. Schebesta an mich am 9. 11. 23.

Babisa-Mbozhwa-Mischbevölkerung von Masantu (NW.-Ecke des Bangveolo): Livingstone, Letzte Reise I, 373 (deutsche Ausgabe, zum Wiederfinden im englischen Original hier das Datum: 19. Juli 1868).

Azande: Lagae u. Vanden Plas, Langue des Azande II, 104 "bangwandu" *als Kinderspiel.* vgl. bei Schweinfurth "ballarūh" für Felddiebe.

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Fig. 3. Fording on stilts across the river Feistritz (a tributary of the Save) in the 17th century. The man on the extreme right is just mounting his stilts. From the picture it is further evident that spare stilts were usually kept at hand on both banks of the river. (After Valvasor 1689).

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Fig. 4. Dance round the maypole in Småland, 1785.
(Painting by P. Hörberg).

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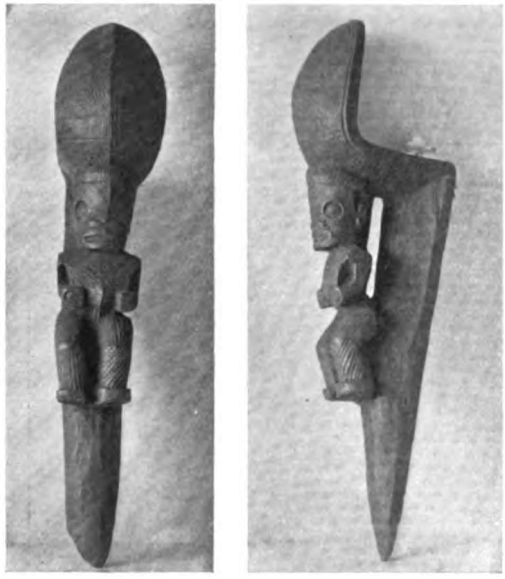

Fig. 6. Foot-rest of stilt, Marquesas Islands. L. 38 cm. (Riksmuseum, Collection Stolpe, No 369).

Fig. 7. Bronze plaque, showing a stiltwalker, Benin. (After Read & Dalton).

Fig. 5. Japanese boy on stilts. (After a Japanese colour-printing).

Fig. 8. Stilt-walker, Maya Indians, Yucatan. (After Codex Troano and Seler).

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Fig. 9. Stilt dance, Ekoi. »Lame Boy» in the foreground. (After Talbot).

Fig. 10. A *mukish* of the Vatchivokwe. (After Capello & Ivens).

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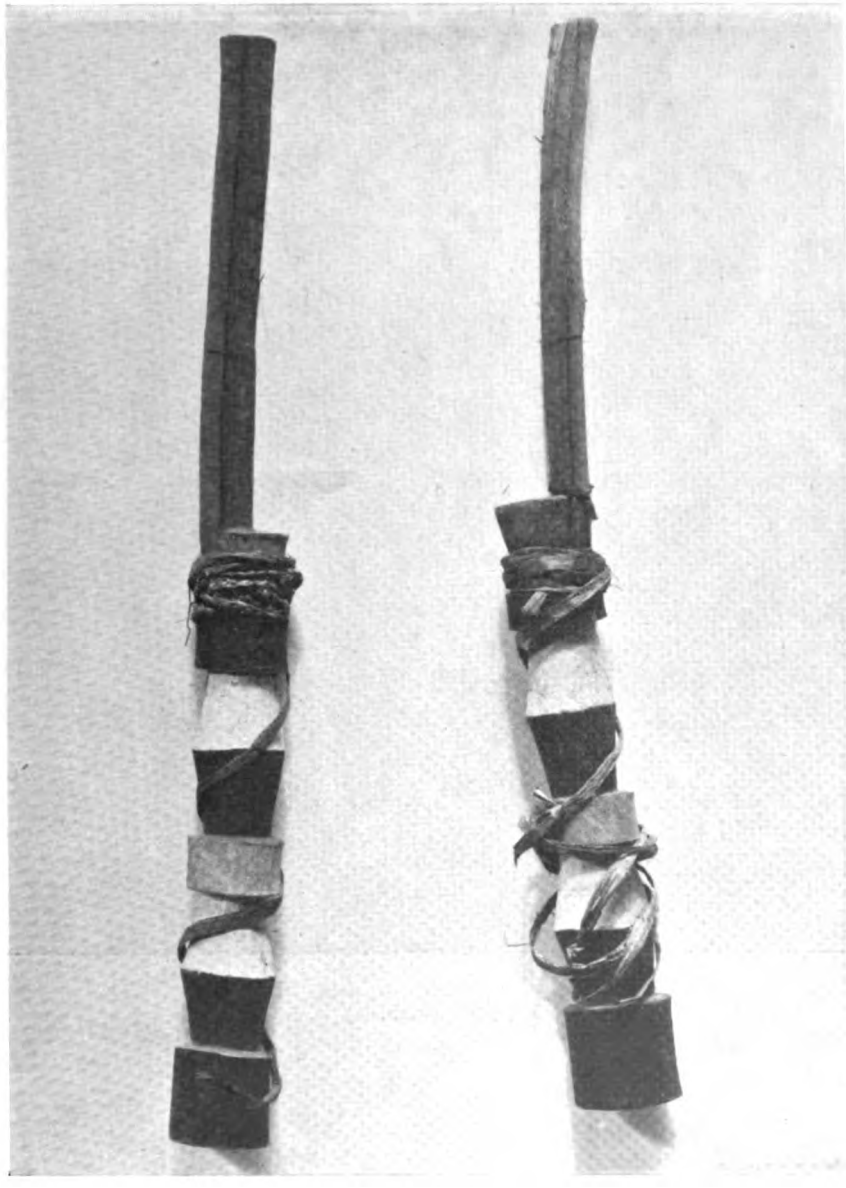

Fig. 11. Stilts, Duala, Painted red, black and white. Provided with strings for lashing the stilt to the lower leg.
(Berlin Museum, III C. 3746).

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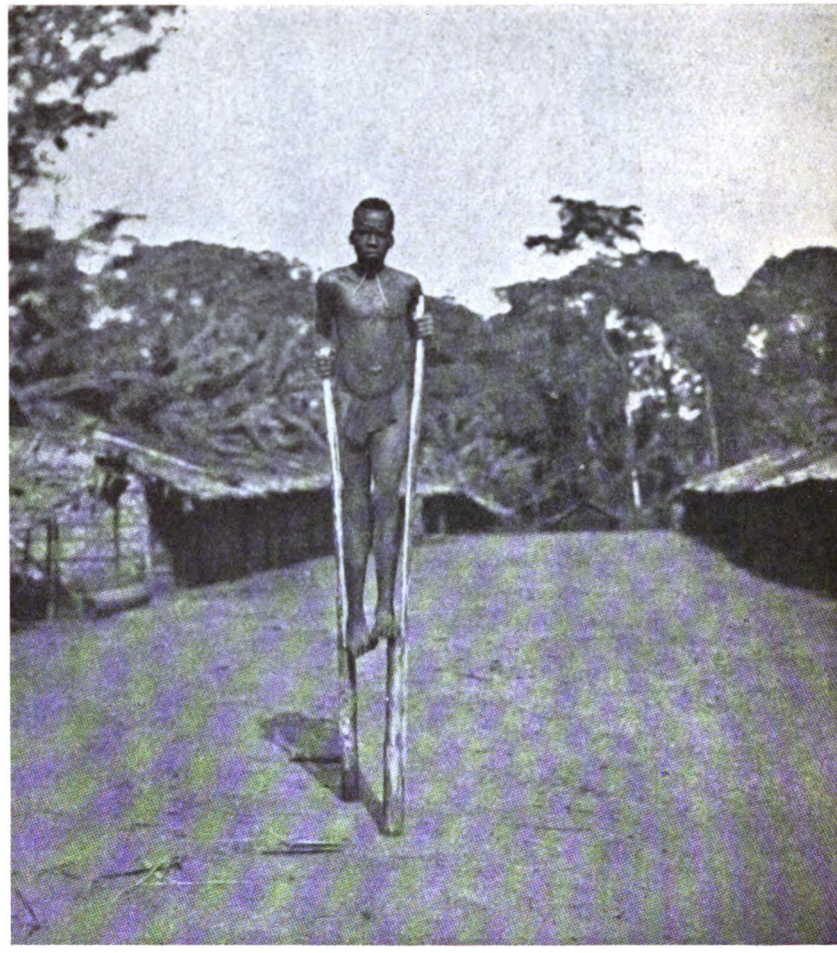

Fig. 12. Pangwe stilt-walker in Alén, Span.Guinea.
(After Tessmann).

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